

**MINUTES OF THE  
FUNDING OF PUBLIC EDUCATION TASK FORCE  
Tuesday, June 13, 2000 - 9 a.m. - Room 405 State Capitol**

**Members Present:**

Rep. Kevin S. Garn, Chair  
Sen. Michael G. Waddoups  
Sen. Paula F. Julander  
Rep. Patrice Arent  
Rep. Greg J. Curtis  
Rep. Brad King  
Rep. David Ure

**Members Excused:**

Sen. Lyle W. Hillyard, Chair

**Staff Present:**

Mr. Bill Asplund, Research Analyst  
Mr. James L. Wilson, Associate General Counsel  
Ms. Alicia Gambles, Legislative Secretary

**Note:** A list of others present and a copy of materials distributed in the meeting are on file in the Office of Legislative Research and General Counsel.

**1. Call to Order -** Rep. Garn called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m.

**2. Committee Business -**

**MOTION:** Rep. Arent moved to approve the minutes of the May 16, 2000 meeting. The motion passed unanimously, with all those present voting in favor.

**3. Historical Overview of Public Education Funding -** Postponed till next meeting.

**4. Organizational Presentations on areas of focus for the committee -**

a. Mr. Steven Laing, Superintendent, State Office of Education, discussed the three areas of focus as outlined by the chair, Rep. Garn, for the Funding of Public Education Task Force. He explained how efficient use of resources is a high priority for everyone involved in public education. He described how alternative programs will effect schools and what some sources of potential revenue are. (For Supt. Laing's presentation, please see "Statement of State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Dr. Steven O. Laing" - 13 June 2000, on file.) Mr. Laing stated that Utah has the greatest need, so the state should give the greatest effort to fund education.

Rep. Garn asked how adequate funding would be defined. Supt. Laing explained that the state needs to identify what the standard of education is in the state and then examine what needs to be done to reach that standard. It is important, he said, through proper research to identify what is successful, whether it be smaller class sizes, summer school, extended hours, etc. Literacy, he felt, was most important.

Rep. Arent asked if Supt. Laing could elaborate on the issue of qualified, professional teachers in every school. Supt. Laing explained that there is a shortage of quality teachers to choose from. He

explained that the State Office of Education is working on ways, through various programs, to help teachers better service the needs of their students. These involve pre-service, induction, and on-going programs. He expressed concern over the shrinking pool of candidates and some of the conditions of employment.

Senator Waddoups asked about RDA's, franchise taxes, and municipal utilities. Senator Julander inquired about the setting of standards and the apparent need of after high school remedial classes.

Mr. Steve Peterson, Utah School Superintendents Association, commented on the shortage of teachers in the state. He explained that students graduating in the area of education are being offered jobs with higher salaries in California and Nevada, and therefore are leaving the state, or are choosing other jobs which pay better than teaching.

b. Ms. Susan Kuziak, Utah Education Association, explained that the funding issues the state faces now should of been foreseeable, through the enrollment increases anticipated, the ongoing needs of technology and materials, the changing demographics of students, etc. She asked why the Legislature would want to fund public education. She suggested that the state would want their children to gain the skills, the knowledge, and the information needed to have productive futures, but also to give benefit back to society. She suggested that the state would want to impart our culture, values, and traditions to children and for them to have opportunities.

Ms. Kuziak expressed UEA's concern over declining test scores and the need for more programs where English is a second language. She pointed out that in the 80's and 90's Utah's average expenditure on children as a percent of the nation's average declined until the last couple of years. She noted that Utah's future economic success depends on a highly educated work force. Transportation spending of \$1.6 billion and tax cuts of \$1 billion were among the causes of this falling average. She cited a pole that indicated that 87% of Utahns would like to see more money spent on education.

In response to a question on adequacy by Rep. Garn, Ms. Kuziak spoke about technological needs, identifying what children need to know to succeed and resources for legally impacted areas where the needs are greatest. In response to a question from Rep. Ure, Ms. Kuziak spoke about enhancements to the basic program and perhaps too great an emphasis on athletics. Rep. Waddoups asked for a copy of the poll that Ms. Kuziak referenced and she said she would supply that to the committee (see enclosure).

c. Superintendent J. Allen Lowe, President, Utah School Superintendents Association, referred to the handout entitled "Efficiency." He analyzed how much it would cost to reduce the class size from present levels in the state to the national average class size. He estimated that it would cost \$1,000 more per student to accomplish this standard. He discussed the challenge of a 40% increase

each year in non-English speaking students. Mr. Steve Peterson pointed out that programs for these students are expensive.

Supt. Martell Menlove, Box Elder School District, Utah School Superintendents Association, presented alternative ways to deliver education in Utah. He spoke on issues relating to tax vouchers, tax credits, charter schools, etc. He explained that the Superintendents Association is in favor of some alternative choices for funding. He explained that if the legislature is not looking at funding alternatives to benefit students, the state is headed the wrong way. He noted that parents are instrumental in the process of student achievement and that parents have more power to determine the most appropriate option for their child with these alternative choices. (For more information, refer to handout entitled "Educational Choice/Alternatives, Who Really Benefits?", on file.) Early graduation and associate degree programs offer real promise but are not fully funded.

Rep. Garn asked the superintendents what the greatest financial needs in their districts are.

Supt. Lowe explained that one of the greatest challenges for public education is the reduction of class sizes, especially in targeted areas. Supt. Menlove explained that his greatest frustration is that after paying teacher salaries and benefits, there isn't enough left to fund the programs that work and benefit students. He stated that approximately 84% of the district's budget goes to teacher salaries.

Rep. Curtis expressed his concern of average students not receiving the help needed to compete when they get to college or university. Karen Derrick, Salt Lake City School District, spoke about the limited choice for average students. Rep. Arent suggested the need for more capacity in effective programs.

Supt. Dennis Mower, North Sanpete School District, commented on the fact that there are some experimental programs being introduced to students this year in North Summit and North Sanpete School Districts. These programs are meant to accelerate or remediate students and to provide enhancements and enrichments for students. He also explained about some learning centers being provided for elementary and middle schools. Sanpete has a big increase in Spanish speaking children and has gone after federal money to open up some community learning centers to provide language training. Supt. Darrell White, Davis School District, mentioned the speed with which things are changing and the difficulty of keeping up.

Mr. Jim Wilson, Associate General Counsel, Office of Legislative Research and General Counsel, addressing the concern of Rep. Curtis about average students not receiving the help they need, explained that in the last ten years, the legislature has passed legislation introducing advanced placement programs, concurrent enrollment, and experimental and developmental programs that include extending the school year. Legislation requires the public education system be designed to advance students as soon as they master skills and to provide for an early graduation program. He also stated that there is a program that enables students to receive an associate's degree by the time they graduate coupled with a scholarship to the college or university of their choosing. Mr. Wilson

indicated that these programs are currently funded and are there for those who would take advantage of them. He suggested the task force may wish to review how these programs are being funded and if parents are aware of all these programs.

Mr. Kent Michie, former Salt Lake School Board member, commented on how the state of Utah is failing to educate students to adequately get a job and form a family. He said we need to flesh out our applied technology system. There is a real need for more hand and tactical skill training.

d. President Colleen Taylor, Utah Parent and Teachers Association, presented a list of priorities of the Utah PTA. She indicated that most schools are efficient and that most parents believe their children are doing well. She said 80% of parents are involved with their student's education. She expressed her concern of resources not being available. She explained that while trying to move into the technology age, by buying computers and CDs, textbooks are still a necessity and are not readily available. She stated that although we know what resources are available, we don't necessarily have the means to acquire them. She suggested that more publicity of the good programs that are being developed by the legislature and public education be made available to the public so that they are aware of the special programs that are available to help their children achieve. (For more information, please see "Legislative Priorities 2000," on file.)

e. Vice President Greg Fredde, Utah Taxpayers Association (UTA), indicated that public education's funding is dependent upon the vitality of Utah's economy, just as Utah's businesses are dependent on an educated, quality work force. He said that 70% of UTA's members support increased funding for education. He also explained that the single greatest threat to the future of education funding in the state of Utah is creating an atmosphere which drives businesses away, therefore creating an atmosphere whereby students graduating from the university do not have access to high paying jobs. Both business and education need each other and the legislature must carefully balance the competitive needs of our businesses, with the important need to educate. If we invest, as typically we do, \$110,000 to educate an individual then if the individual stays in the state, Mr. Fredde estimated the individual will pay \$181,000 in income tax, \$70,000 in sales tax, and \$45,000 in property tax. If the individual leaves the states because there is no job, then the state gets very little return on its investment.

Mr. Fredde cited the commitment of businesses who adopt schools, provide scholarships, etc. to help the education system. A good business climate, he felt, is important to the success of the economy and to the education system. Higher corporate franchise taxes and higher individual income tax rates will hurt the business climate, he stated.

Within the existing taxing structure, Mr. Fredde suggested property taxes, which must go through truth in taxation, could perhaps be used to a greater extent. Mr. Fredde then suggested four areas the committee could look at.

1) Catalog and Internet sales that are escaping tax collection and the \$34 million diversion from property taxes by redevelopment agencies.

2) Structural changes in the way we fund education. Block grants to give more local autonomy and the use of credits and vouchers for greater parental choice.

3) The exempt status of electrical and other enterprise funds.

4) Broaden the base of the system by looking at the exceptions and exemptions provided in our present system.

Rep. Garn stated that the public when looking at funding options mention delay in road bonding to free up resources, greater use of school leeways and a soda pop tax. Rep. Garn also said the needs expressed were for class size reduction, comprehensive programs for struggling students, and the adequacy of the basic school program.

Rep. Ure spoke about the need for greater flexibility at the school level and illustrated it with an example of a school in the Alpine District.

The superintendents mentioned that the rise in the cost of benefits is putting a real damper on the ability to be flexible. Rep. Curtis spoke about his fear that the struggling student who is just getting by is being largely ignored. Sen. Julander mentioned a case where a principal recommended to some parents to find a private school for their child. She argued we need programs to keep children in the system.

Rep. Garn thanked everyone for their participation.

## **5. Other Task Force Business**

Rep. Garn asked that at the next meeting information be provided on the present system of funding education and its purposes.

**MOTION:** Rep. Curtis moved that the task force meet on Thursday, June 29 at 1 p.m. and Tuesday, July 11 at 9 a.m. The motion passed unanimously.

## **6. Adjourn**

**MOTION:** Sen. Julander moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 11:55 a.m.

